



**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Environmental Quality



M.J. "Mike" Foster  
Governor

J. Dale Givens  
Secretary

March 15, 2001

# FAST-MOVING STORM BLANKETS LOUISIANA WITH POLLEN AND DUST

**A** storm system that quickly moved through Louisiana last night left more than inches of rain and some flooding in low-lying areas. The storm also left its mark in the form of colorful pollen and dust. Vehicles, homes, driveways and lawns were blanketed with the particles. Callers who were concerned that the foreign matter might be a health hazard inundated the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Emergency Response Hotline. But Chris Roberie, a DEQ Administrator, says the Department commonly receives many complaints this time of year associated with tree pollen and strong frontal systems like the one that moved through last night.

"This is the time of year when our abundant vegetation comes out of their winter hibernation. Pollen sprays fill the air and are carried by the wind and currents. But the event last night appears to be more related to naturally occurring red dust from the Southwestern United States and northern Mexico. This material is carried in the upper atmosphere by prevailing winds. The pollen and dust normally fall to earth randomly and are widely distributed. But heavy rain associated with strong weather systems can concentrate the pollen and dust in relatively small geographic areas, making them more apparent. This is what our initial sample analysis has shown and is the most plausible explanation for what happened last night," Roberie says.

In fact, the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission (TNRCC) reports that the Commission was tracking two dust storms in Texas yesterday (one south of Lubbock and the other near Big Bend). DEQ is continuing to investigate the event with additional sample analysis of the particles to scientifically confirm their origin and composition.

---

Contact Jeff Simon, Ph.D. for more information: (225) 763-5403; e-mail: